

"Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" Initiative

Evaluation Report

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Description of Initiative

"Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" is a short-term reading intervention that challenges a class group of students to engage in recreational reading and to collectively read over one million words within a reasonable timeframe (usually six weeks). The initiative can be planned and implemented as a home-based or as a school-based project. When designed as a home-based project, the students read individually at home and their parents monitor and record their progress. Parents support and encourage the students' reading through the use of the "pause, prompt, praise" strategy. The total of "words read" is communicated to the school on a regular basis throughout the initiative. In school, the collective "running totals" of the class is recorded and charted. Once the target of one million words has been reached, the class group is rewarded and their achievements celebrated. In the absence of parental engagement, "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" can also be successfully adapted, planned and implemented as a school-based intervention to support recreational reading.

The "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" initiative has been developed by the JCSP Support Service and is funded by the Department of Education and Science, under the Early Literacy Initiative.

Rationale and Objectives

Without sufficient literacy skills, a student's pathway to success in learning is significantly impeded and restrained. Poor literacy skills are also a major obstacle to a smooth transition to the world of work. Within the busy school day, time can rarely be found for the student to engage in recreational reading and in honing independent reading skills. At home, time is not always set aside for enjoying recreational reading and for experiencing the joy that a favourite book can bring.

Failure to develop adequate competencies in reading can have many serious consequences for students. As well as being one of the major determinants of academic success or failure for the individual student, competence in reading also impacts directly on a student's self-image and on his or her motivation to engage with the formal learning environment. Struggling readers are never enthusiastic about having to revisit the mechanics of reading in a second level school context or having to encounter a learning environment which has a high literacy content.

The involvement of parents in home-reading programmes is one way of supporting and enhancing the literacy development of reluctant and resistant readers. The "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" initiative provides a framework whereby parents may be involved, in a practical way, in supporting their children's literacy development.

Research undertaken by Stephen Krashen (1993) suggests that young teenagers read more when there is some incentive to do so. He recommends the development of "fun" initiatives, which draw attention to books and to the act of reading as something that can be exciting, recreational and enjoyable. Krashen also suggests that in-built rewards and reinforcements are desirable to kick-start these initiatives and to sustain the student's interest in them.

Once the student develops the habit of regular recreational reading, the intrinsic pleasure of reading becomes activated and becomes the catalyst, which supports and sustains engagement with recreational reading. In time, recreational reading acquires its own dynamic. The "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" intervention is also grounded in, and is in synch with, the Meekian philosophy, which claims that "reading is learned by reading" and that the primary way to improve a student's reading is by providing structures and opportunities which encourage students to read at his or her own level (Meek 1982).

The "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" Initiative is focused on the attainment of the following objectives:

- Provide a creative approach to encourage and support the development of reading for pleasure
- Expose the student to the enjoyment of recreational reading
- Enable the student to experience a sense of success and achievement in reading
- Consolidate emergent reading competencies and to provide support on the journey towards independent reading
- Introduce the student to the world of literature for adolescents
- Develop a sense of co-operation and teamwork across the class group of participating students
- Introduce a highlight celebratory event into the rhythm of the school year
- Foster and give purpose to parental involvement in supporting the student's literacy development
- Encourage the student to evaluate, and write reviews on, the books that he/she has read during the Initiative

Participating Schools

The following schools participated in the "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" 2006 Initiative:

- Cobh Community College
- Davis College
- Abbeyfeale Vocational School
- St. Kevin's School (Cork Youth Encounter Project)
- St. Enda's Community School
- Maria Immaculata Community College
- Listowel Community College
- Killarney Community College
- Coláiste na Trócaire, Rathkeale
- Bunclody Vocational School
- Galway Community College
- Marino College
- Wexford Vocational School
- Coláiste Bríde
- St. Oliver's Community College
- Athy Community College
- St. Peter's School
- Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana
- Trinity Comprehensive
- Patrician College
- O' Carolan College
- Deelee College
- St. Laurence College
- Bush Vocational School
- St. Patrick's College, Naas
- St. Farnan's Community College
- CBS Westland Row
- St Kevin's College
- Convent of Mercy, Goldenbridge
- Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School

Each school was provided with a suite of "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" resources and materials, including bookmarks, wall posters, achievement certificates, a list of popular teenage literature and the Teacher Guidelines explaining how to plan, organise, manage and evaluate the "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" Initiative.



Number of Students Involved

- Three hundred and eighty students participated in this initiative.
- Thirty-eight classes participated in this initiative.
- An equal number of first-year classes and second-year classes participated in the initiative. Students from third-year classes were not selected to participate.

Number of Teachers Involved

- Fifty-eight teachers participated in planning and implementing the initiative in the participating schools.
- The following subject departments participated in the initiative: English, Resource, Learning Support, SPHE, PE, Home Economics and Maths.

Planning and Implementation of the Initiative

The average timeframe allocated, by participating schools, to the implementation of the initiative, was **six weeks**. All participating class groups of students attained the "one million word" threshold within this **six-week timeframe**. Students in one school attained an amazing **2,955,384 word-total** in 6 weeks. One school reported that the initiative was so successful that participating students were reluctant to bring closure to the initiative and expressed a desire to continue on reading at home, with parental support, after the one million word-threshold had been reached.

Because of poor parental attendance at the information session, some schools planned and organised "*Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?*" as an in-school reading programme. One school devoted three class periods each week to the initiative. Two other schools set aside two class periods each week for participating students to engage in recreational reading. Students carried their "*Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?*" folders home so that their parents could sign-off on progress achieved during the reading periods. The average duration of a recreational reading session at home was fifteen minutes and it was reported that recreational reading occurred "on three nights per week" during the initiative.

Developmental Activities within the Initiative

The following activities were important components of the planning, implementation or celebration phases of the initiative:

- Acquiring "*Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?*" initiative funding (€500).
- Acquiring "*Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?*" initiative resources: (Millionaire achievement certificates, Millionaire bookmarks, Millionaire posters, "Best Reads" posters, "Top 10 Reads" posters, list of popular teenage literature, list of major education suppliers and copies of the "Gap Reading Comprehension Test" manual and test.
- Getting to know the Word Millionaire Initiative:
 - Participating teachers familiarise themselves with the framework and resources of the initiative.

- Selecting the target group to participate in the initiative
 - "Selling the initiative" to participating students: generating enthusiasm for recreational reading and becoming a "word millionaire".
 - Organising and preparing a student pack (score cards, book review questionnaires etc.)
 - Introducing reading into regular class-work so as to establish a pattern for the activities of the initiative
- Informing parents of the initiative.
 - Schools invited parents and students to an information night on "*Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?*"
 - Requesting parents to encourage and support recreational reading at home and to monitor and maintain running totals of the total number of words read by the students.
 - Informing parents of the effectiveness of the "Pause, Prompt, Praise" strategy and encouraging parents to utilise this strategy at home during recreational reading sessions.
 - Schools prepared an information folder for parents.
 - Parents were visited by the Home School Community Liaison coordinator, during the duration of the initiative.
- Implementation of pre-initiative testing (Gap Reading Comprehension Test).
- Selecting appropriate texts:
 - Getting participating students to select books of interest to them
 - Using the recommended teenage literature lists (supplied by JCSP Support Service)
 - Visiting local bookshops (e.g. Easons). The students selected interesting books that they would like to read. These books were then ordered and purchased by the school, using initiative funding, and the students were encouraged to borrow the books, to take them home and to engage in recreational reading.
 - Visiting the local library to select appropriate books.
 - Inviting educational suppliers to visit the school and place their range of age-appropriate texts on display for the students.
 - Visiting the distribution warehouses of local educational suppliers.
 - Because they were purchasing in bulk, some schools reported that they received a "*very good deal from Easons*".
 - Some schools reported that they were able to purchase over 200 texts with the Word Millionaire funding.
- Identifying the word-totals of texts:
 - Transition Year students were involved in the calculation of the word totals of the selected texts.
- Establishing arrangements for the return of books by the students and the exchanging for new texts.
- The school-based model:
 - When sufficient parental support was not available, the initiative was planned and implemented as a school-based project. In this scenario, opportunities had to be provided in class and during the school day for students to engage in recreational reading.
 - Additional "free classes" were used for recreational reading.
 - A "reading room" was made available at lunchtime for recreational reading.
 - Opportunities were provided, in class, for students to describe and discuss the characters, storylines and most exciting sections of their books.
- Receiving "word-total" data from parents and systematically monitoring and graphing these collective "running totals". These cumulative trend graphs were always strategically located so that participating students could regularly monitor progress and achievements.



- Getting the students to fill in a book review report each time a book has been read.
- Displaying the students' selection of books on JCSP "Top 10 Reads" and "Best Reads" posters
- Implementation of post-initiative testing. Analysis of test results.
- Celebrating achievements:
 - Congratulatory JCSP postcards were sent to the students' homes throughout the initiative
 - Selecting prizes to be distributed at the culmination of the initiative, e.g. phone credit cards, €20 or €10 gift vouchers, favourite magazines, organising a class trip, being entered into a draw for CDs and MP3 players etc.
 - On Monday mornings, at the school assembly, the class totals of words-read were announced and were entered onto the tracking barometer.
 - Regular visits to classrooms by the principal to inquire about the students' progress in the Word Millionaire Project and to offer his/her encouragement to sustain their efforts at recreational reading.
 - Organising a celebration event at the culmination of the initiative where "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" achievement certificates were distributed to participating students.
 - Getting a class photograph taken of the students receiving their Word Millionaire achievement certificates and having the photograph published in the local newspaper (e.g. "Limerick Leader").

The in-built Research Dimension

A research dimension was built into the "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" Reading Challenge Initiative in order to evaluate the impact, successes, achievements and shortcomings of this reading challenge intervention. To attain a comprehensive and holistic evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative assessment approaches were utilised.

Quantitative Assessment

Participating schools were supplied with copies of the "Gap Reading Comprehension Test" for pre- and post-initiative testing. Teachers reported that this test did not pose excessive complexities or challenges for the students and was easy to administer. The "Gap Reading Comprehension Test" enabled teachers to correlate raw test scores with reading age equivalencies. However some schools were unable to return completed pre- and post-test results for every student that participated in the project because of work demands and time constraints encountered in the final term of the school year and because of reported high student absenteeism on the dates selected for the pre- or post-initiative testing.

Qualitative Assessment

Teachers were requested to include, in their evaluation reports, any anecdotal evidence of attitudinal change towards reading among participating students. Hocking (1998) describes anecdotal evidence of attitudinal change as the critical "*shining moments*" of any intervention.

Evaluating the Initiative

- Twenty-three evaluation reports were returned at the completion of this initiative.
- Nineteen of these evaluation reports contained pre and post-test results.
- When these pre- and post-initiative test results were analysed, it was discovered that **71% of the students**, who had presented for and completed both pre and post testing, **had made progress** and had attained superior reading-age scores.

- Two schools reported that **100% of students**, who participated in the initiative and who presented for both pre and post testing, **attained superior scores** in the post-initiative testing.
- The greatest individual advancement in test-scores, within the allocated six-week timeframe, was **+3 years and 6 months in reading-age** equivalence.
- **An overall average improvement of +5.5 months in reading age** equivalence was attained by the cohort of students who sat for both pre and post testing.
- Some regression in test results was also reported. The following were identified and highlighted as causal factors for this regression: the complexities and challenges presented to some students by the Gap test format ("*Many of our students find formal assessment very threatening*") and the poor attention span and concentration levels of some students.

Participating teachers were delighted and extremely satisfied with the levels of quantitative improvement that were detected in the post-initiative test results.

Feedback from Teachers

The following commentaries, received from participating teachers, portray the excitement and enthusiasm that was generated by this initiative and suggest the emergence of **positive attitudinal change towards recreational reading** among participating students:

Overall Comments on the Effectiveness of the Initiative

"Reading has now become part and parcel of their English classes".

"We would really love to get this initiative again, as it was very successful in our school".

The Word Millionaire initiative has generated staff-discussions on how *"JCSP initiatives can be introduced to improve reading standards in school"*.

"The maths teachers used the Word Millionaire graphs to explain statistics".

"Because the books purchased were of interest to the students, the boredom element was removed".

"Appropriate texts have made it easier to sell reading to reluctant readers".

"The motivation of appropriate texts, the tracking barometer, vouchers and the trip proved very beneficial in changing reading behaviour".

Word Millionaire helped to *"conqueror the student's reading phobias"*.

The participating teachers collaborated in the planning and implementation of the initiative and *"worked very well as a team"*.

"The wall chart was a good motivation for the students. They look forward to Tuesdays, as that was when the total of words for the week went up".

"The teachers learned more about teenage literature and what kinds of reading material captures students' interest".



"The motivation of getting a certificate and prize at the end of the initiative worked well".

"The students really got into it and some of them are still asking to borrow books, even though the initiative has finished".

Word Millionaire provided the students *"with a goal and they were motivated to read to achieve this goal"*.

Word Millionaire provided schools with *"the platform for positive reinforcement of student effort and achievement"*.

"Many teachers became interested in the successes of the Word Millionaire initiative and introduced reading into their lessons".

After making their books selection in the local library, the students were *"treated to lunch in the local cafe"*.

Many teachers were keen to get involved in the initiative and willingly agreed to permit the students to read for the *"last 15 minutes of the class"*.

"The participating students asked their subject teachers if the reading of their textbooks in different subject areas could be allowed to increase their word count totals".

"Word Millionaire was such a success that it was suggested that it could be extended to the entire junior cycle cohort next year".

"Teachers acquired a greater understanding of the advantage of working as a group or team towards a specific goal"

"By encouraging the students to read more, we helped them expand their word vocabularies, thus making English classes a more participatory and enjoyable event".

"We benefited from the resources made available to us by the JCSP Support Service".

"The teachers built up a great rapport with the students and stated that they would definitely take part in this initiative again".

Comments on Students

"The students were greatly enthused by the initiative and participated willingly".

"Most of the students made a huge effort and reached the million word threshold in four weeks".

"Once the six weeks were up, the students asked that they be allowed to read each day as part of their English class".

"They were terribly proud of themselves and openly discussed the books that they were reading".

The students *"learned that reading can be fun"*.

The students *"enjoyed reading together for a common goal"*.

The initiative helped to *"foster teamwork among participating students"*.

"Most reading ages improved".

Teachers found the students *"enthusiastic"* about the project.

The initiative helped to develop and *"foster better class dynamics"*.

"The students' enthusiasm rubbed-off on others".

"The students were to be seen reading at lunchtime in order to build up the totals of words-read".

"Some students read more than they had ever done".

"The students enjoyed Word Millionaire".

"The class came together as a team in order to get the biggest total possible each week".

"The students felt very positive about reading in front of their peers".

The students were observed reading before school commenced.

The students regularly *"encouraged each other to read"*.

The students acquired *"greater self-esteem and confidence regarding their status as readers"*.

The students experienced *"the feel-good factor through working as a team to achieve a common goal"*.

It was reported that students acquired an *"improved attitude towards reading"* and *"an increase in reading ability"*.

"This increase in reading fluency has raised standards across the curriculum".

"The motivation of appropriate texts, the tracking barometer, vouchers, achievement certificates and the trip proved very beneficial in changing reading behaviour".

The students have *"greater confidence and belief in themselves as readers"*.

"The students are much more likely to pick up books and browse... something which some of them had never done before the initiative".

The students were provided with *"increased exposure to books"*.

Word Millionaire *"became a talking point for other students and staff"*.

The students were *"eager to read and acquired a great sense of pride and achievement"*.

"The students' attitude towards reading is more positive".

The students are *"capable of reviewing books"*.

"Every student was willing to take part and was anxious to find out his word scores".



"Many students recommended books to their pals".

"Each student was able to recommend a book to the principal and to tell him why they liked the book and its story".

"As the word count grew, the students felt a great sense of achievement".

"The students felt that Word Millionaire was a welcome break from the norm of classroom activities".

"The students started by going for the smallest books that they could find. As they got more confident, they became more ambitious and seemed to enjoy getting into the reading initiative".

"There were several students who had to be persuaded into reading as they didn't believe they could do it. However, all students managed to read some books and this gave them a real sense of achievement. Some students actually expressed surprise at their progress".

"The students became more motivated".

"One student read a full book for the first time... 'Danny the Champion of the World'".

"Most of the students' reading ages improved".

Many students acquired "an enthusiasm for reading".

The students' self-esteem was improved by the achievement of targets.

"Some students continued reading their book after the one million word threshold had been reached".

"I would rate the Word Millionaire initiative as a huge success and look forward to operating it again next year".

"Word Millionaire generated great excitement, enthusiasm and a sense of pride and achievement in students, who would otherwise be frustrated and unmotivated"

"Our overall word-total was an amazing 2,389,101"

"Because of the very large number of words read by the students, we had to change the name of our initiative to Word Multi-millionaire"

"On Friday 26th of May, 2,955,384 words were read. Five students then asked if they could read a book over the weekend to make it 3 million".

"Two students were very enthusiastic about reading and managed to finish two books. This was a major accomplishment for them".

"The students' reading comprehension and written responses to texts have improved".

"Most students became more enthusiastic about reading aloud".

Students, who were involved in Word Millionaire, became less reluctant to participate in reading exercises in other subject areas.

"The students' improved reading comprehension and written expression have been well received by their subject teachers".

"The students became quite competitive and enjoyed completing book reviews and creative worksheets".

"One student, who had very poor literacy skills, began reading the newspaper at home to increase his word count".

"It gave the students a real sense of achievement and maybe even a love of reading".

"Before the Word Millionaire challenge, one student commented that he couldn't read a page never mind a book. This student managed to complete his chosen book".

"Now the idea of buying a book for themselves, or joining a library to borrow books, is not unreal to them".

"All students benefited from this initiative. It give them a greater scope for understanding words".

"This initiative gave the English classes a greater focus".

"The students took to the project work with ease. There were less behavioural problems among the students during the initiative".

The students *"took responsibility for their reading"*.

"No damage was found on any books. They were read and returned".

"They showed great appreciation for books and have become more willing and enthusiastic readers".

"Some students failed to take up the Word Millionaire challenge".

"The students exceeded the million word threshold by some distance".

"The students enjoyed the task and gave very enthusiastically to the project".

"Many students had not actually read an entire book before, so they were very pleased with their own efforts".

"They enjoyed adding up the totals and watching the target come ever closer".

"Even though there was a substantial difference between the text of some books in comparison to others, there were no snide remarks".

"I was amazed that the students were actually willing to sit and read day after day without complaining".

"The students were delighted that €500 had been given to buy books for them and them alone".

"The students learned that books can be just as entertaining as play stations and computer games".

"They discovered that reading means and that you are never alone".

"They said that they were now better at English".



The teachers involved reported that some students surprised them by their commitment to the initiative.

"It was great to see some students reading, as they had never read a book before".

"Their standard of English improved as did their interest in the subject".

"While it was said that some students initially did not have a clue who Roddy Doyle, Roald Dahl or Eoin Colfer was, it is wonderful to now see them searching the book shelves for books by these authors".

"The students acquired a huge interest in books. They couldn't wait to finish one book and begin another".

"We were worried that we would not have enough books to keep them going".

"Great excitement was generated in the class over their tracking chart".

There was an improvement in *"the way that students described things".*

"An improvement in basic spellings" was reported.

"In the beginning some students did not want to do this challenge at all, but now they are delighted that they did".

"They are very proud of what they have achieved".

"A large number of teachers congratulated them on their achievements so they felt very important".

"It was a very worthwhile project".

"The students who disliked reading were able to choose a book about cars, so unknown to themselves they were actually reading".

"All the participating students were highly motivated to win the prize by reaching the one million word threshold before the other class group".

"The teachers couldn't believe how motivated the students became in their English classes. One teacher commented that you could hear a pin drop in her class".

"This initiative created great excitement".

"Students were encouraging each other so that they could reach the target".

This initiative *"created a positive approach to reading in their homes".*

"The students loved the importance of having parents involved".

"Reading was fun, an activity to be enjoyednot endured".

"The students now appreciate the importance of reading".

The students developed a sense of responsibility: *"They had to get the forms signed at home and keep a record of books that they had read".*

The students' *"overall attitude to school-work improved".*

Comments from Students

- "We have become more experienced readers".*
- "Word Millionaire was very enjoyable".*
- "We took responsibility for our own reading".*
- "We now know that we should be reading more".*
- "We've been encouraged to read more books".*

Comments on Parental Involvement

- Feedback from parents was a very positive.
- The parents, who attended the celebration night, were very enthusiastic about the initiative.

The Post-initiative Celebration

- The celebration events, at the culmination of the initiative, were generally well attended. Parents were delighted with the initiative and expressed their willingness to participate in similar initiatives in the future.

Some Popular Teenage Literature

Participating teachers reported that the following texts were "cool" and very popular with participating students: (recommended texts from previous "Who wants to be a Word Millionaire?" initiatives are also included):

- Local and regional newspapers
- Roal Dahl, "Danny the Champion of the World"
- "Live Wire" series (Hodder and Stoughton)
- Barrington/Stokes publications
- "Rockets" series
- "Rainbow" series
- "Fame" series
- "Horrible Histories" series
- "Megan" series
- "Guinness Book of Records"
- "Five Minute Thrillers"
- "Wolf Hill" novelettes
- "Saving Private Ryan"
- "Sportzone" series
- "Goosebumps"
- "Narnia"
- "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"
- "The Big Football Collection"
- "The Big Cup Collection"
- "Makeover Magic"
- "Teen Idol"
- "Stargirl"
- "Christie's Dream"
- "Do I Look like I Care?"
- "Who's Who of Horrors"
- "Angel"
- Range of Penguin books
- Sports biographies (eg Roy Keane, Rooney, David Beckham etc.)
- Books dealing with fishing, hunting, horses, dogs, sport, celebrities, tractors, car racing, football etc.
- "I See Your Baby" text game
- Daily tabloid newspapers
- Judy Blume, "It's Not the End of the World"
- Benjamin Zephaniah, "Talking Turkeys"
- Benjamin Zephaniah, "Wicked World"
- Benjamin Zephaniah, "Funky Chickens"
- Paul Jennings, "Unbelievable"
- Paul Jennings, "Undone"
- Paul Jennings, "Uncanny"
- Eoin Colfer, "Benny and Babe"
- Eoin Colfer, "Benny and Omar"
- Jacqueline Wilson, "Story of Tracey Beak"



- Jacqueline Wilson, "Mum Minder"
- Anthony Horowitz, "Alex Rider" series
- Lenary Snickett, "Series of Unfortunate Events"
- Anita Jackson, "No Rent to Pay"
- Paul Jennings, "Eye of Evil"
- Angela Griffiths, "Stories of Suspense"
- Bill Ridgeway, "Break Out"
- Bill Ridgeway, "Over the Wall"
- Penny Bates, "Tiger of the League"
- Jacqueline Wilson, "Worry Website"
- Kieran Fanning, "Trapdoor to Treachery"
- Rob Child, "Time Rangers" series
- Robert Rigby, "Goal!"
- "Nanny Mc Phee"

JCSP Statements Used in Conjunction with the Initiative

- English Statements: number 1 ("Personal Expression"), number 2 ("Experience of Literature and Media") and number 4 ("Experience of Literature")
- Basic Skills Statements: numbers 1 and 2
- Cross Curricular Statements: number 14 ("Organising and Planning a School Function"), number 15 ("Social Competence: Reading from Texts"), number 16 ("Social Competence: Functional Writing") and number 17 ("Social Competence: Listening").

Ancillary Developments

Because of the wave of enthusiasm generated by this initiative, one school successfully bolted-on additional learning activities:

- Viewing of "Danny the Champion of the World" DVD
- Depicting scenes from the texts in artwork and sketches
- Typing of summaries of the chapters read
- Revision of basic keywords
- As a result of their involvement in the initiative, some of the participating students progressed to write and compose their own short stories: (*"In the beginning of the year, these boys could not write a paragraph. Now they are creating their own fiction"*).
- Class discussions on the story's plot, the characteristics and personal traits of the main characters, personal responses to the books, evaluating and grading the books etc.
- Designing alternative cover-designs for the books

Some schools reported that the "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" initiative was instrumental in developing collaboration and collegiality between participating teachers. The planning phase of the initiative led to a lot of discussion around literacy in general and heightened and elevated awareness of the impact of literacy on learning.

One teacher designed a draft "Who Wants to Be a Word Millionaire?" statement to correspond with and mirror the activities of the initiative.

Book Reviews

The students were quite willing to complete book review forms after they finished reading a book. They were also quite willing to recommend, or not to recommend, the books to their classmates.

Some Challenges and Difficulties Encountered

Some difficulties were also encountered during the initiative. Because the initiative took place in the final term of the school year, some participating teachers felt under pressure to complete the initiative within the allocated time-frame. One school reported that, because the Easter holidays occurred during the implementation phase of the initiative, the initiative had lost some of its momentum and dynamic when the students returned to school after Easter.

Poor parental representation and attendance at the information night meant that some schools had to plan and design the "Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" initiative as an exclusive in-house programme, without the desired parental input.

Recommendations for Future Developments

The following recommendations were received from participating teachers:

- Even more success could be achieved by introducing and implementing the "*Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?*" initiative in term one of the school year.
- Implement the initiative at a stage of the school year where no interruptions occur (i.e. avoid spanning holiday periods/ mid-term breaks with the initiative.
- Try and get the parents more involved in the initiative. ("*Getting parental involvement was the most challenging aspect of this project*").
- Organise ancillary events to correspond with the Word Millionaire initiative e.g. book-fair, visits by authors and visits to bookshops.
- Locate a timetabled-slot (e.g. 3 periods) on the class timetable each week for the implication of JCSP initiatives.
- Make use of Transition Year students to determine the word-count of the books.
- Place a word-count grid on the cover of each book.
- Begin planning for the initiative at the start-up meeting in September
- Create a collective wall poster to showcase the students' fantastic achievements in reading.
- At the halfway point of the initiative, organise an update meeting with parents.
- Involve Transition Year students as reading-mentors and "reading buddies".
- Provide a "reading room" for recreational reading at lunchtime.



- *"I feel it is important that these students be re-motivated to read again in second and third years, through repeated participation in Word Millionaire or in a similar initiative".*
- Organise a daily word-count.
- Expand the initiative activities into a wider range of classes (e.g. Home Economics, Materials Technology Wood, Art etc.)
- Include opportunities for the students to engage in "storytelling", based on their reading. This would provide an ideal opportunity to enhance their communication skills.
- Have the word-count already calculated before the reading process begins. (*"I felt at times that the word counting took precedence over the reading"*).
- Arrange to have an author visit the students in their classroom, during the initiative.
- Avoid selecting the same students to participate in back-to-back reading initiatives.

Synopsis of Findings:

"I would rate the Word Millionaire initiative a huge success and look forward to operating it again next year"

"Word Millionaire generated great excitement, enthusiasm and a sense of pride and achievement in students, who would otherwise be frustrated and unmotivated"

"Our overall word-total was an amazing 2,389,101"

"Because of the very large number of words read by the students, we had to change the name of our initiative to Word Multi-millionaire"

"On Friday 26th of May, 2,955,384 words were read. Five students then asked if they could read a book over the weekend to make it 3 million".

"Before the Word Millionaire challenge, one student commented that he couldn't read a page, never mind a book. This student managed to complete his chosen book".

"Now the idea of buying a book for themselves, or joining a library to borrow books, is not unreal to them".

"We were worried that we would not have enough books to keep them going".

Synopsis of Statistical Analysis:

- **380 students** participated in this initiative.
- **38 classes** participated in this initiative.
- An equal number of first-year classes and second-year classes participated in the initiative. Students from third-year classes did not participate.

- **58 teachers** participated in planning and implementing the initiative in the participating schools.
- The following subject departments participated in the initiative: English, Resource, Learning Support, SPHE, PE, Home Economics and Maths.
- Twenty-three evaluation reports were returned at the completion of this initiative.
- Nineteen of these evaluation reports contained pre and post-test results.
- When these pre- and post-initiative test results were analysed, it was discovered that **71% of the students**, who had presented for and completed both pre and post testing, **had made progress** and had attained superior scores.
- Two schools reported that **100% of students**, who participated in the initiative and who presented for the pre and post testing, **attained superior scores** in the post-initiative testing.
- The greatest individual advancement in test-scores, within the allocated six-week timeframe, was **+3 years and 6 months in reading-age** equivalence.
- **An overall average improvement of + 5.5 months in reading age** equivalence was attained by the cohort of students who sat for both pre and post testing.



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